



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Chief Academic Officer

Summer 2010

# English Language Arts Summer Learning Packet

## Grades 6-8

## Introduction

These take home activities are designed to support your child's reading over the summer. The most important thing you can do to help children become better students is to encourage them to read on their own and think critically about what they've read. We encourage you and your child to find reading material that is of interest to him or her in order to foster a love of reading and strengthen reading skills. A great place to start is the *Make Waves* book list that the DC Public Library has available at all branches and that is available online at <http://www.dclibrary.org/summerreading>. This packet provides activities to help students think about, engage in, and respond to their reading.

## ***Make Waves: DC Public Library and DC Public Schools Summer Reading Activities:***

Dive into a good book and make waves! Reading is a way to relax and escape by immersing yourself in a totally different reality. Reading is also the best way to get informed about fascinating and important issues in your own neighborhood or across the globe. It's a way to learn about amazing people, learn more about yourself or learn a new skill – the possibilities are endless! The DC Public Library has put together a great list of fiction and non-fiction titles, movies and websites to help you “make waves” this summer. The activities below are ideas suggested by DCPS to help you get the most out of your reading.

### **I. Non-Fiction “Issues” Reading:**

Need to find a cause to become passionate about? Want to feel more informed about the world around you? Need ideas for college essays and intriguing dinner conversation? This summer, work on becoming an informed and skilled participant in our society’s conversations about important issues through non-fiction reading. **Choose a movie, website article or non-fiction text from the DC Public Library *Make Waves* list that presents an issue and/or an opinion on an issue of the world today. Complete one of the following response options.**

- a. **Summary** – Write a paragraph or two describing the main idea and supporting details of the text (article, essay, movie, webpage). What is the most important part of the text? What new things did you learn about the topic? Why is this topic “newsworthy”? What is your recommended action in response to the information presented?
- b. **Agree, Disagree, Qualify** – If you’ve read an editorial, an Op-Ed piece, or a persuasive essay, you’ve read someone’s argument. What was the author trying to say? What do you think influenced this author in coming to that conclusion? Do you think the author makes any assumptions? Now respond with your own argument. Write a short argument (1-2 paragraphs) in which you agree, disagree, or agree-and-disagree with the author. Make sure to explain why you take the position you do.
- c. **Questions** – Write 3 thoughtful questions you have about the issue. What do you not understand? What did the author fail to mention that you think is important? What do you think will happen next in this story or series of events? What else do you need to know in order to understand it?
- d. **Draw** – Draw a picture representing your thoughts about the issue and/or argument. Use the drawing to interpret or respond to the article. At the bottom of the picture, write a paragraph explaining your drawing and what you are trying to communicate through it.
- e. **Comic Strip**—Create a comic strip educating people about the issue and what we could/should do about it!

**II. Literary Non-Fiction:**

Try out one of these activities in conjunction with one of the literary non-fiction texts or movies:

- a. **Change Agents:** Many of the texts/movies on the *Make Waves* list tell the stories of people making change. Choose one of these stories and keep a running list of the actions/events that happened to the “change agent” that helped make it possible for him or her to make the changes described in the text. What inspired you about the change agent(s)? Do you see any similarities between them and yourself? What would you say to the person if you could talk to him or her? Write a letter to the change agent in the book. If possible, send it to the actual person and see if you get a response! Talk to your librarian about helping you find an address.
- b. **Action Plan:** Many of the texts/movies on the *Make Waves* list give an example of someone making change or give direct information about how to make change. What is an issue in your community that you would like to improve? What are some of the ideas you learned from your reading? Write an action plan of what you could do to affect change. Take the plunge and begin making waves!

**III. Fiction:**

A good book can change your life—choose one of the novels on the *Make Waves* booklist and dive into a great experience!

**Keep a reading journal as you read and write a response after every 20-30 pages. Here are topics and questions you can choose from as you write your reading journal entries.**

**Character:**

What do you like or dislike about the main character?

Does the main character seem to be realistic—do they have strengths as well as flaws?

Who/what influences the main character in this book?

List all the characters—what is the purpose of each one? Why did the author bother to include them?

How does the character change?

Who does the character remind you of?

What would you say to the character if you could talk to them directly?

**Setting:**

What do you think of the setting? Is it a place (and time) that you would like to visit? Why or why not?

How does the setting influence the events of the story?

How would the story be altered if it was set in a different time or place?

Rewrite the introduction to the same story in a different setting.

**Style/Language:**

Do you like the way the author writes?

How would you describe the author’s style—formal, informal, descriptive, flowery, blunt, etc.?

Have you found examples of figurative language? Where?

What images have been most powerful in your mind as you read?

Choose a quote that was powerful. Write it down—why did you like it?

Theme:

What is the theme (or main message) in this book?

Do you think that this book could affect change in people or in society as a whole? If so, how and why? If not, why not?

How does the author deliver their theme/message? Is it obvious or do you have to piece it together as the reader? Explain.

Overall Response:

Is this a book that you would re-read? Why or why not? Would you recommend it to a friend? Why or why not?

Write an alternate ending to the story.

Write a letter to the author. Ask your librarian for help in sending the letter to the author, if possible.

Write a critique of the book and post it on a reading website that publishes book reviews! Be sure to go beyond just a summary and explain what are the strengths and drawbacks of the texts.

**Intermediate *Make Waves* book list – (Ages 9 and up)**

*Amazing Sharks!*/ Thompson, Sarah/ JUV 597.3 THOMPSON

*Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of the Iliad*/ Rosemary Sutcliff/ JUV 883 SUTCLIFF

*Captain Kate*/ Reeder, Carolyn/ JUV J REEDER

*Cat O'nine Tails (A Cat Royal Adventure)*/ Golding, Julia/ JUV J GOLDING

*The Cay*/ Taylor, Theodore/ JUV J TAYLOR

*Dolphin Song*/ St. John, Lauren./ JUV J ST. JOHN

*Flush*/ Hiaasen, Carl/ JUV J HIAASEN

*Gaia Girls Way of Water*/ Welles, Lee./ JUV J WELLES

*A Girl Named Disaster*/ Farmer, Nancy/ JUV J FARMER

*In the Deep Sea*/ Collard, Sneed/ JUV 572.43 COLLARD

*Island of the Blue Dolphins*/ O'Dell, Scott/ JUV J O'DELL

*The Lightning Thief*/ Riordan, Rick/ JUV J RIORDAN

*Magic By the Lake*/ Eager, Edward/ JUV J EAGER

*Many Waters*/ L'engle, Madeline/ JUV E L'ENGLE

*Mr. Popper's Penguins*/ Richard Atwater/ JUV J ATWATER

*Oceans*/ McMillan, Beverly and John A. Musick/ JUV 551.46 MCMILLAN

*Sea King's Daughter: A Russian Legend*/ Shepard, Aaron / JUV 398.2 SHE

The Siren Song/ Ursu, Anne/ JUV J URSU

Summer of the Sea Serpent/ Osborne, Mary Pope/ JUV J OSBORNE

The Tail of Emily Windsnap/Kessler, Liz / JUV J KESSLER

Treasure Island/ Robert Louis Stevenson/ JUV J STEVENSON

The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle/ Avi/ JUV J AVI

20,000 Leagues Under The Sea/ Vernes, Jules / JUV J VERNES

Underwater Oriqami/ Biddle, Steve and Megumi/ JUV 736.98 BIDDLE

The Voyage of The Dawn Treader/ Lewis, C.S. / JUV J LEWIS

The Wanderer/ Creech, Sharon./ JUV J CREECH

The Water Horse/ King-Smith, Dick/ JUV J KING-SMITH